Fairview Farm and Nursery

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Trees and Plants
for the Southwest

EDNA, TEXAS

The Satsuma Orange Grove and Its Cultivation

THE SATSUMA orange industry has arrived. It has been demonstrated that the Satsuma deserves the highest place among commercially grown oranges. It has also been fully demonstrated that the trees in the well-cared-for orchard are hardy enough to live and flourish in the Gulf Coast climate. It has been shown that where the proper care is given the trees, the yield of fruit is heavy and increases as the trees grow older. Until about three years ago the commercial production of Satsumas was confined almost entirely to Northwest Florida, Southern Alabama, and the Mississippi coast. Here and there you could find a scattering of Satsumas (doing well) as far west as Beeville, Falfurrias, and that section of Texas. Also in the section south and southwest of San Antonio, Texas, known as "The Winter Garden District."

First Satsuma Plantings

Thirty years ago there were few Satsuma orange trees in the Gulf Coast country. The first grove set out was that of W. R. Van Cleave at Pascagoula, Miss., in January, 1895. This original planting consisted of 20 trees bought from a Florida nursery.

Now that the Satsuma orange industry has become so successful and important, the name of the man who introduced it into the coast and the date of the first planting are facts which deserve recognition and record. From 1895 orchards were set out at various times, and in different localities. Broadly speaking, from the Atlantic to the Rio Grande. People living in the Gulf Coast section, property owners and land and colony companies doing business there, began to take an active interest in the Satsuma as a practical fruit for this section. About 1910 this interest became so great that Satsuma orange culture was widely advertised as a veritable bonanza and the planting of orchards developed into a boom. It was predicted that within five or six years thousands of carloads of Satsuma oranges would be moving from the Gulf Coast, and fortunate owners of a few acres of trees would have independent and permanent incomes.

A Temporary Setback

In November, 1911, a severe freeze almost cleaned up the orchards in the Texas Gulf coast. The temperatures were as low as 16 above in most Texas points on the coast. November 30, 1911. However, Satsumas have been known to stand much lower temperatures and fruit heavy the following season, where trees have had plenty of moisture during the growing season, and sufficient cultivation to make the

trees harden their new growth before real winter begins.

The new producing sections of Satsuma oranges, in a commercial way, is taking place in Southwest Louisiana, or referred to as the Highlands district. The same being portions of Beauregard and Vernon parishes. Also the same conditions exist in Southeast Texas, north of Beaumont, in the cutover pine lands. This section of Southwest Louisiana and Southeast Texas is believed by many people to become, in the near future, the coming Satsuma commercial producing district in the South. These two sections have an ideal soil condition for the production of Satsumas, being a sandy soil underlaid with a porous red and yellow clay. The rainfall is also sufficient.

The Citrus Trifoliata

The citrus trifoliata is the only deciduous plant in the citrus family. It has been known in China and Japan for hundreds of years, and in many parts of the latter country is planted in hedge rows. The Japanese have for ages been budding the Satsuma on it to insure the fruit tree against injury by extreme cold. There are different varieties of trifoliata, and it so happened when the great demand for Satsuma trees came to the Gulf Coast a lot of inferior stock was used, which was not the true trifoliata. Experience and a better understanding of the plant has now put the industry on such a basis that only tested trifoliata stock can be planted. There are rigid government regulations in regard to the inspection and testing of the stock, and Alabama also has a state law providing for the use of only tested and approved stock.

Early Fruiting

In three years from setting out a Satsuma tree will bear fruit, and in five or six years it will produce good crops. The older the tree the better the production. The orchards which today are giving the finest results are nine to twelve years old or older. The trees will live and bear to a very old age. A Japanese horticulturist has said that with the proper stock and cultivation a Satsuma orange tree should produce crops for 100 years. We have heard travelers say they had seen Satsumas 300 years old in China.

Distance for Planting

Early plantings were usually set out in rows from 15 to 18 feet apart. Often they were planted between rows of pecan trees with the idea that orange and pecan orchards would grow together to advantage for the land owner. It is now known that oranges and pecans should not be interplanted, for they require different care and fertilization, and sooner or later one or the other must be sacrificed. Experience also proved that in the early plantings the trees were not far enough part, and later plantings are in rows up to 25 feet apart. It is now

known that with increasing size of trees as they grow older, even that distance may not be enough, for the growth of trees together may not leave sufficient space between the rows to properly cultivate the orchard. An orchard cannot be neglected and give good results. The amount and kind of fertilizer given the trees largely determines the size and quality of the fruit as well as the yield. Cowpeas and soy beans or some other nitrogen gathering legume is good to plant in orchard after last cultivation, ordinarily about September 1 to 15.

A Beautiful Tree

The Satsuma orange is a beautiful tree. The older trees over the country now are from 10 to 12 feet high with wide spreading limbs. Where the trees are only 18 feet apart the spreading limbs and branches frequently overlap each other so that it is impossible to cultivate between them.

Returns From Orchards

The Satsuma has sold in the past as high as $5.00 or more a box, that is for a half-strap, and that is higher than the ordinary orange of high grade grown in Florida or California brings the grower or shipper. The average for Alabama Satsumas this season, as per market quotations in all of the principal Eastern and Northern markets, was around $3.50 per bushel basket. This is a new pack the Alabama growers and shippers have tried this season, and the trade seems to like it.

We have accounts from growers all over the country where returns were as much as $700.00 per acre on old trees 12 years and up. We have a grower near Victoria, Texas, whose gross sales in 1924 were $6400.00 from 600 trees 14 years old. These oranges were sold to the trade at $2.75 per half-strap box. This same grower has a brother in Redlands, Cal., who is also a grower of citrus fruit, Navels and Valencias. Two years ago the California brother visited the brother near Victoria, Texas, and in comparing notes from a standpoint of dollars and cents, the Texas grower makes more clear money from Satsumas than the Golden State growers do.

Satsuma Advantages

Where the Satsuma is properly cultivated and fertilized, they can be marketed in October and November and by the time Parson Brown, Pineapples and other standard and round oranges come on the market the Satsuma is out of the way. The Satsuma is the first orange on the market, consequently has no competition, and this is something to take into consideration from a standpoint of dollars and cents. There is room for more orchards. There is opportunity for the homeseeker who wishes to secure a good home location, and to get into a profitable industry which will keep him on the land.

For the demand for Satsumas will increase as fast as its production.